

Federal News Service
June 26, 2002 Wednesday

Defense Department Operational Update Briefing

BRIEFERS: DONALD RUMSFELD, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE GENERAL RICHARD MYERS, CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

An excerpt reads:

Q Mr. Secretary, the new International Criminal Court goes into action next week, I believe. How satisfied are you that U.S. military personnel could not be subject to that court?

SEC. RUMSFELD: (Pause.) You're the general. (Light laughter.) I heard -

Q I said "Mr. Secretary".

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, did you?

Q Yes. I'm sorry -- (off mike, laughter).

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh. Okay. Well, I'll be happy to. I'm not satisfied. I'm not satisfied that military or civilian officials of this department or any other department of the government are going to be free of the potential activities of that court. That court is unusual in a variety of ways. It assumes jurisdiction over everyone, regardless of whether or not their country or origin has participated in the court. It seems not to have any end point. It seems not to have any focus. It's across the board. And we know that the terrorist training books teach people how to lie and make accusations about the killing of innocent civilians and how to promote that to the press so that it gets carried around the world and everyone begins to believe it. The more it's said, pretty soon people start believing that stuff. And if you're not on the ground to stop it, why, a politicized or a loose cannon prosecutor in a court like that can impose enormous difficulties and disadvantages on people: individuals, governments. And as a result, the United States has decided that we're -- as you have read, we're operating in the United Nations to try to get resolutions to exempt U.S. forces from the requirements of that court, or the imposition of that court. To the extent we're participating in peacekeeping activities that are U.N. related, we intend to do a similar thing by going around to countries on a bilateral basis. There is a provision in the treaty which permits countries to come to an agreement bilaterally that -- in this case U.S. -- forces operating in their country would not be subject to the court and that they would not extradite people -- Americans -- to the court. And it's both civilian and military.

Q Just a follow-up. If we do not get that resolution that we are seeking excepting U.S. forces, would you be comfortable with U.S. personnel participating in U.N. peacekeeping operations?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, I've just said I'm uncomfortable.

Q I mean, would they -- I mean, the U.S. ambassador, I think, said last week to the U.N. that if we didn't get that, we would not participate in U.N. peacekeeping.

SEC. RUMSFELD: When that treaty goes into effect, I believe July 1st, the situation changes. And we have indicated, I believe -- well, I shouldn't -- I can't speak for the Department of State, but I believe, depending on what the state of play is on resolutions, that there are some that can be vetoed by the United States. And that is another option, of course.